**Adolescent Literacy (4-12): Motivating Students to Further Engage with Texts**

Organizational for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – a worldwide reading assessment and survey of 15-year-old students in 32 industrialized countries including the United States offers a fascinating snapshot of students’ opinions and feelings about what motivates them to read. Reading engagement has a greater impact on achievement than either socioeconomic status or parental occupation. Other research on instructional approaches known to be intrinsically motivating in the upper grades includes:

* Students are more motivated to read when the reading is related to content they are studying and when they are given reasons to read that connect with real-world purposes for reading (Greenleaf, Jimenez, & Roller, 2002: OECD, 2002).
* Students are more motivated to read when they set personal goals regarding what and how much they want to read and then get regular feedback from the teacher regarding their progress (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
* Students are more motivated to read when they are expected to explain the meaning of the text to other students (OECD, 2002).
* Students are more motivated to read when they can choose materials to read that are related to a content goal in the classroom – preparing a report, giving a brief talk, or making a poster (OECD, 2002).
* Students are more motivated to read when the goal is mastery of specific content rather than performance goals in which students are measured against each other and ranked (OECD, 2002).
* Students are more motivated to read when they can choose what to read (Guthrie & Davis, 2003; McLloyd, 1979; Turner, 1995).
* Students are more motivated to read when the material is related to new media, lke song lyrics, cheat sheets for computer games, comic books and graphic novels, fashion magazines, motorcycle and care magazines, and maintenance manuals (Alverman, 2003).
* Students will expend the effort needed to read if they are interested in the material (Eccles, Wigfield, & Shiefele, 1998; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004).
* Students are more motivated to read when they can learn something they did not know before from reading the text (Harp & Mayer, 1997).
* Students are more motivated to read when social collaboration is involved. In addition, collaborating during reading increase students’ ability to comprehend the reading material (Ng, Guthrie, Van Meter, McCann, & Alao, 1998).

Taken from *Teach Them All to Read: Catching Kids Before They Fall Through the Cracks* by Elaine K. McEwan (p. 148)

**What Current Research Is Showing Teachers**

* That literacy is a dynamic interaction of the social and cognitive realms, with textual understandings growing from students' knowledge of their worlds to knowledge of the external world (Langer, 2002). All students need to go beyond the study of discrete skills and strategies to understand how those skills and strategies are integrated with life experiences. Langer, et al. found that literacy programs that successfully teach at-risk students emphasize connections between students' lives, prior knowledge, and texts, and emphasize student conversations to make those connections.
* That the majority of inexperienced adolescent readers need opportunities and instructional support to read many and diverse types of texts in order to gain experience, build fluency, and develop a range as readers (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001;Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). Through extensive reading of a range of texts, supported by strategy lessons and discussions, readers become familiar with written language structures and text features, develop their vocabularies, and read for meaning more efficiently and effectively. Conversations about their reading that focus on the strategies they use and their language knowledge help adolescents build confidence in their reading and become better readers (Goodman and Marek, 1996).
* That most adolescents do not need further instruction in phonics or decoding skills (Ivey and Baker, 2004). Research summarized in the National Reading Panel report noted that the benefits of phonics instruction are strongest in first grade, with diminished results for students in subsequent grades. Phonics instruction has not been seen to improve reading comprehension for older students (National Reading Panel, 2000). In cases where older students need help to construct meaning with text, instruction should be targeted and embedded in authentic reading experiences.
* That utilizing a model of reading instruction focused on basic skills can lead to the mislabeling of some secondary readers as "struggling readers" and "non-readers" because they lack extensive reading experience, depend on different prior knowledge, and/or comprehend differently or in more complex ways. A large percentage of secondary readers who are so mislabeled are students of color and/or students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Abundant research suggests that the isolated skill instruction they receive may perpetuate low literacy achievement rather than improve their competence and engagement in complex reading tasks. (Allington, 2001; Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Brown, 1991; Hiebert, 1991; Hull & Rose, 1989; Knapp &Turnbull, 1991; Sizer, 1992). In addition, prescriptive, skills-based reading instruction mislocates the problem as the students’ failure to learn, rather than the institution’s failure to teach reading as the complex mental and social activity it is. (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, and Mueller, 2001)
* That effective literacy programs move students to deeper understandings of texts and increase their ability to generate ideas and knowledge for their own uses (Newmann, King & Rigdon, 1997).
* That assessment should focus on underlying knowledge in the larger curriculum and on strategies for thinking during literacy acts (Darling-Hammond and Falk, 1997; Langer, 2000; Smith, 1991). Likewise, preparation for assessment (from ongoing classroom measures to high stakes tests) should focus on the critical components above.

Taken from NCTE Guideline - *A Call t Action: What We Know About Adolescent Literacy and Ways to Support Teachers in Meeting Students’ Needs.*

Other Research:

* In a review of 180 school-based studies, researchers found that students’ academic achievement test scores went up an average of 11 percentile points when their schools started social and emotional learning programs. (Edutopia article – p. 25)
* Three factors that impact student motivation to read (*Development of Reading Attitudes* in ‘Literacy and Motivation’ by Michael McKenna, 2001):
  + The student’s prior reading experiences
  + The culture that surrounds the student both at home and at school
  + The student’s expectations about the reading experience